

by David Sarasohn, *The Oregonian*



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Rather than spend Congress' Memorial Day weekend working on his barbecuing, Rep. Earl Blumenauer went on a road trip: He traveled to China with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and came back with some unsettling news.

As Oregon prides itself on its alternative energy efforts, there may be some people ahead of us.

In fact, there may be a billion and a half people ahead of us.

China, Blumenauer told the editorial board of *The Oregonian* Friday, is now spending \$200 billion on alternative energy. He rode a high-speed train from Beijing to the coast, covering 80 miles in 29 minutes, a system the Chinese want to expand all over their country.

"We visited an amazing facility doing thin-film photovoltaic systems," a form of

solar power, he reported. "On the windows of buildings, they not only generate enough energy to power the building, they have power left over."

The system is not only powerful but ironic; it's being developed by DuPont, an American company, but the development center is in Hong Kong and the factory is in China.

"We're going to end up," Blumenauer warned, "buying our own technology back from China and Europe."

Right now, Oregon preens itself on being the American center of solar technology, on the wind turbines marching across our hills, on being a contender for an electric car factory. But, Blumenauer points out, companies go to where government invests in the new technology, and now only 15 percent of the top alternative energy companies in the world are American.

"We spend one-tenth of a percent of of the total cost of our energy on research," he warns. "There's no part of the economy where we spend so little, and this is our future."

And it could be a somewhat limited future if we spend it going to Germany for solar technology, and to Denmark for wind technology, and to China for electric cars.

Blumenauer says that the climate control bill slowly working its way through Congress would provide more resources for energy research, and more opportunities to work with countries like China on containing emissions from coal. It's a step, he says, that could move us closer to controlling both global warming and our own economic future.

And maybe it would let him spend his vacations doing something more, well, vacationlike.

